

2. THE VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT: BASAVANNA

Virasaiva movement led by Basavanna made the first great effort known in the Karnataka to employ the mother-tongue of the people for original statement of high thought and religion. The movement tried to change the life of the masses in many directions but more important than any change effected or attempted was the attitude of self-examination and self-respect which it seems to have made common among its followers. Basavanna himself was an example of this attitude to his generation as seen from his sayings which were recorded for the benefit of followers. These sayings have formed, as it were, a code of Virasaiva teaching and have influenced the followers of the creed of *Sivachara* ever since.

Basavanna's life is not definitely known in more detail than the life of many another great man in Indian history and poetry has hidden much truth in speaking of it. The following facts are, however, generally accepted. He was born and did his work in the twelfth century; he came of Brahmin stock; gave up the practices of his community as they seemed to him too ritualistic and over-formal ; went over to the Virasaiva faith which in those days seems to

have been making headway in the country;
became
employed in the court of Bijjala in Kalyan
and rose
to considerable power; and used his
unequalled abilities
ties and opportunities for spreading the
faith which
he had adopted. This active propaganda
on behalf of
a faith made enemies and there was civil
disturbance